

Words and water

A study of watersheds through literature

14.5

"The love of learning, the sequestered nooks, and all the sweet serenity of books."
— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

To stick your hands in the river is to feel the cords that bind the earth together in one piece," writes Barry Lopez. Much as Lopez considers the river a way to bind the earth together, we can use a study of watersheds to bind together a multi-disciplinary approach to learning. A study of watersheds is not just a study in science. Watersheds stretch across state and national boundaries as well as across the disciplines, reaching through lessons of mathematics, social science, and literature to help children and adults gain a deeper understanding of our water resource and how we affect it. Incorporating literature into a study of watersheds is especially valuable. Through stories, we vicariously experience the lives of people and wildlife in a water world. Stories and analogies help us understand the importance of humans acting as stewards of the water environment.

The first requirement of a watershed study is to let students experience first hand their own watershed—outside of the classroom walls. Then, using studies across the disciplines, allow students to explore the watershed from a variety of angles. Combining literature and writing activities helps students discover how other writers feel about watershed topics. Students can then communicate their own feelings and what they learn with a number of different techniques.

Following are a few examples of elementary-level children's literature related to water, watersheds, and wildlife. Each entry lists the grade level and a brief description of the piece. Contact your local Education Service District or public library for more titles and information. Explora-

tions on the Internet may yield even more titles. For guidance in centering an entire language arts unit around watersheds, contact the Illinois Rivers Project, Southern Illinois University, PO Box 2222, Edwardsville, IL 62026-2222, phone: (618) 692-2446, fax: (618) 692-3359, e-mail: rivers@siue.edu, or website: <http://www.siue.edu/OSME/river>. Ask for ordering information about the Rivers Project Curriculum series, which includes materials for language arts, mathematics, geography, earth science, chemistry, and biology.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer Gr. 4-7

by Mark Twain, Scholastic, Inc

The American classic adventure of a boy growing up in a 19th century Mississippi River town.

Argyle Turkey Goes to Sea Preschool-Gr. 3

by James E. Davis, DLM Teaching Resources

On the way to see a whale in the ocean, Argyle Turkey sees a pond, a stream, a swamp, a lake, a river, a waterfall, and finally, a whale in the bay.

Sallie Peila, Harney ESD Learning Resource Center, prepared this literature list. Many thanks for her efforts.

Beavers Beware!

Preschool–Gr. 3

By Barbara Brenner, Bantam Books

A family with a house on the river finds two beavers cutting down trees and building a lodge on their dock. A Bank Street Ready-to-Read book.

Come Back Salmon

Gr. 3–6

by Molly Cone, Little Brown and Co.

True story of a group of students that helped reclaim a local stream so that salmon could once again spawn there.

Fish Eyes

Preschool–Gr. 3

by Lois Ehlert, Scholastic Inc.

A counting book depicting the colorful fish a child might see if he turned into a fish himself.

Fish Is Fish

Preschool–Gr. 3

by Leo Lionni, Scholastic Inc.

A minnow wants to follow his tadpole friend—who becomes a frog—onto land.

Freshwater Alphabet Book

Preschool–Gr. 3

by Jerry Pallotta, The Trumpet Club

A colorful alphabet book introducing some familiar and some unusual aquatic animals.

The Hole in the Dike

Preschool–Gr. 3

by Norma Green, Scholastic Inc.

When a young boy in Holland sees a small trickle of water leaking through the dike, he bravely spends the night with his finger in the hole in order to save his country from a flood.

How Many Fish?

Preschool–Gr. 1

by Rachel Gosset, Scholastic Inc.

Beginning readers count the fish in ponds, lakes, and streams.

In a Small, Small Pond

Preschool–Gr. 2

by Denise Fleming, Scholastic Inc.

A rhyming text describes the seasonal changes in a frog's little pond.

McElligot's Pool

Gr. K–3

by Dr. Seuss, Random House

A young boy fishes in McElligot's pool with high hopes.

Over the Steamy Swamp

Preschool–Gr. 3

by Paul Geraghty, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

A hungry mosquito starts a food chain in a steamy swamp as each hungry animal both preys and is preyed upon.

Paddle to the Sea

Gr. 3–6

by Holling Clancy Holling, Houghton Mifflin Company

The journey of an Indian boy in a small canoe traveling from Lake Superior to the Atlantic Ocean.

Rain Drop Splash

Preschool–Gr. 3

by Alvin Tresselt, Scholastic Inc.

Rain becomes a puddle, then a lake, and grows larger and larger until it reaches the sea.

***A River Ran Wild:
An Environmental History***

Gr. 1-4

by Lynne Cherry, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers

An environmental history of the Nashua River, from its discovery by Indians through the polluting years of the Industrial Revolution to the ambitious cleanup that revitalized it. A Reading Rainbow book.

A Salmon for Simon

Gr. K-4

by Betty Waterton, Groundwood Books

Simon, a young Native boy, has been trying to catch a salmon all summer but when the opportunity finally arrives he must decide whether to take it home or let it go.

Squishy, Misty, Damp and Muddy, The In-Between World of Wetlands

Gr. K-6

by Molly Cone, Sierra Club Books

An introduction to the many kinds of wetlands, their importance in our lives, the plants and animals that live there, and why we must work to preserve these habitats.

Swimmer

Gr. K-6

by Shelley Gill, PAWS IV Publishing

The story of the Chinook salmon. Swimmer's journey over 10,000 miles illustrates the cycles of life for the salmon and the girl Katya, who is coming of age.

Water Dance

Gr. K-6

by Thomas Locker, Harcourt, Brace and Company

An innovative and beautiful picture book that follows water's constant dance—a poetic text and complementary paintings contain hundreds of fascinating facts about water.

Water's Way

Preschool-Gr. 3

by Lisa Westberg Peters, Scholastic Inc.

Tony watches water change from clouds to rain to frost, until it finally becomes snow, and he can try his new sled.

What Makes it Rain? The Story of a Raindrop

Gr. K-3

by Keith Brandt, Troll Associates

Where the River Begins

Gr. K-3

by Thomas Locker, Puffin Books

Two boys and their grandfather camp and hike to follow the river to its source.